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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: review of mainstreaming in organizations of the United Nations system**

# Report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women on the elimination of violence against women

## Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Commission on the Status of Women the attached report, which was prepared by the United Nations Development Fund for Women in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 50/166, on the activities of the Fund to eliminate violence against women.

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## Annex

# Implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/166 on the role of the United Nations Development Fund for Women in eliminating violence against women

## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 50/166, the General Assembly emphasized the importance of taking holistic, coherent and coordinated actions to eliminate violence against women at the national, regional and international levels. In the same resolution, the General Assembly designated the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to play a catalytic role in promoting joint actions and to strengthen its activities to eliminate violence against women in accordance with the recommendations set out in the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action.[1] Pursuant to that resolution, the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women was established in 1996 and became operational in 1997.

2. Some highlights of the activities of UNIFEM in the past year pursuant to the mandate given by the General Assembly are described below. In this connection, UNIFEM takes note of the recommendations made by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session and the conclusions on violence against women adopted by the Commission at that session.[2] UNIFEM attaches importance to the conclusions as policy guidance and recognizes that the clarification of targeted areas of action contained therein[3] are particularly helpful to UNIFEM in ensuring that its operational activities are consistent with the policy direction developed at the intergovernmental level.

## II. Provision of resources for international, regional and national actions: Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women

3. Special attention should be drawn to the increased role of UNIFEM in respect of the operational activities under the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women. The Trust Fund has achieved growing recognition by the international community not only as a multilateral grant-making mechanism that provides financial support for international, regional, national and grass-roots actions, but also as a centre for learning that plays a catalytic role regarding sharing of good practices on efforts to eliminate violence against women.

4. Regarding its financial status, UNIFEM received in 1998 the sum of $1.8 million[4] from Governments and non-governmental organizations in contributions to the Trust Fund. The contributions were utilized to support 29 new projects that had been selected by the inter-agency Project Approval Committee at its third meeting, which was held in May 1998.[5] As of January 1999, all 29 projects became operational.[6] Over 100 project proposals will be reviewed for the next grant cycle in 1999.

5. Regarding the issues addressed by the Trust Fund, 11 projects focused on problems rooted in specific forms of violence against women, namely domestic violence (six projects), health, including female genital mutilation (two projects), trafficking in women (two projects) and femicide (one project), while the rest of the project portfolio addressed general problems of violence against women. Three projects were undertaken by gender units within central or local governments, while the rest are being executed by local, national, regional or international non-governmental organizations. The strategies utilized in each project varied according to the issue targeted, and include awareness-raising, training of professionals, public education including legal literacy, advocacy, servicing for victims, and action-oriented research.

6. Violence against women is a prevalent global phenomenon and its elimination requires concerted actions at all levels. The Commission on the Status of Women stressed the importance of sharing information and requested the United Nations to take action to "consider ways to share good practices and lessons learned, including establishing a readily accessible database of good practices and lessons learned with regard to all forms of violence against women".[7]

7. For its part, UNIFEM worked on increasing its institutional capacity to develop ways to share the experience gained from the implementation of the Trust Fund. Of particular importance is the creation of the learning component for the Trust Fund. Primary functions of the new component are to conduct overall review and analysis of the project portfolio, extract lessons and results obtained

through its interventions and contribute to improve the funding policies and guidelines of the Trust Fund. As the only international funding mechanism that is exclusively devoted to addressing the problem of violence against women, the Trust Fund offers a unique prism from which the phenomenon of violence against women in all its forms can be analysed and explored globally. The learning component of the Trust Fund, which became fully operational in January 1999, will serve as a global resource centre to review, analyse and extract important lessons from its grant-making activities, and facilitate the goal of identifying most appropriate points of intervention as well as best methods and practices on initiatives to combat violence against women across regions.

8. The elimination of violence against women is a dynamic and continuous process. In the dynamic scope of this process, the learning component will provide tools to implementing agencies and beneficiaries of the Trust Fund to follow up on the results achieved and interventions made during the implementation of the projects. It is critical for UNIFEM to learn about the social and political implications of the activities involved, especially negative factors that may adversely affect the outcome of the implementation of projects. The learning component will also assist the organization in identifying best practices that could be shared across regions.

9. UNIFEM is currently involved in the process of developing a methodological framework for the dissemination of the results produced by the learning component to Governments, other agencies and bodies of the United Nations, other international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and members of civil society at the national, regional and international levels. Of particular importance is the involvement of the media, which will play a key and vital role in the dissemination process.

## III. UNIFEM/inter-agency regional campaigns on violence against women

10. As a contribution to the United Nations commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UNIFEM launched a series of inter-agency regional campaigns to eliminate violence against women in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific. The three regional campaigns share the goal of raising public awareness about violence against women as a violation of human rights, highlight its economic and social costs to society, and bring together the efforts of the United Nations system in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. Campaign events have been widely covered by the media in all regions, have spearheaded changes in cultural attitudes and behaviour and have been pivotal in creating a favourable environment for the introduction of changes in national legislation. More important, the regional campaigns have contributed to the opening of a discussion on issues traditionally considered taboo in many societies and are having an impact on the general attitudes prevalent at the community level to this issue, raising questions about male involvement and responsibility in its eradication. The campaigns have also re-energized a constituency to advocate for changes in key institutions such as the judiciary, law enforcement, health care, the media and education.

## IV. Efforts to support and encourage partnerships for networking

11. **Videoconference entitled *A World Free of Violence against Women*.** Another important contribution that UNIFEM has made towards the goals of the Beijing Platform for Action in the past year was to further increase partnerships for networking with all relevant institutions, including non-governmental organizations, at all levels. One of the groundbreaking actions is the UNIFEM initiative, in collaboration with other United Nations agencies, to host a global inter-agency videoconference entitled *A World Free of Violence against Women*. The videoconference will take place on International Women's Day, 8 March 1999, during the forty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women.[8]

12. The objectives of the event are to present best examples of strategies to end violence against women worldwide, transcending national, cultural, religious and socio-economic boundaries; to elicit global support for national, regional and international actions; and to give visibility to the implementation of the recommendations set out in the Beijing Platform for Action. With the support of advanced videoconferencing technologies, the event will be conducted at five sites simultaneously, linking four regional sites in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America with the General Assembly Hall at United Nations Headquarters, which will serve as the main site. Participants include representatives of Governments, United Nations agencies, the European Commission and non-governmental organizations, as well as those who represent the regions not linked to the site in New York. The entire event of the

videoconference will be visually recorded for distribution to educational, research and other institutions, including universities and schools, and the public in general for education, training and other purposes.

13. The event will be enriched by reports on the outcomes of the inter-agency regional campaigns to eliminate violence against women in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific, which were initiated by UNIFEM in 1998. While each of the three campaigns is launched in the light of regional priorities and concerns, common goals are also set across regions, including the goal to change attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate violence, which constituted one of the targeted areas of action that were identified by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session.

14. **Launch of the Internet Virtual Working Group entitled "End-violence".** The preparatory process for the videoconference provides a good opportunity to establish partnerships for global networking. In order to facilitate in-depth discussion at the videoconference, UNIFEM launched, in collaboration with the World Bank and Global Knowledge Partnership, an Internet Working Group discussion entitled "End-violence".[9] The Working Group offers a unique virtual site dedicated to the discussion of the issue of violence against women. It is utilized to exchange information, share experiences and discuss a variety of strategies used for ending violence against women. The Working Group discussion will now become a model for a WomenWatch initiative to enhance civil society involvement in the five-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action.

15. Since the launch of the Working Group on 8 October 1998, its membership has been growing. According to statistical data as of 7 December 1998, 1,019 individuals joined the Group as subscribers from 80 countries, including 44 developing countries. Fifty-seven per cent of the subscribers are from outside North America. A conservative estimate suggests that at least 29 per cent are from developing countries and countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS): Africa (7 per cent), Asia and the Pacific (15 per cent), Latin America and the Caribbean (3 per cent), and Central and Eastern Europe and CIS (4 per cent).

16. The results of the discussion relating to strategies will provide substantive input for the videoconference on 8 March 1999. Issues discussed by the Working Group include law reform; access to justice; awareness-raising; changing social and cultural norms; networking and advocacy; information and communication technology; the role of non-governmental organizations, international organizations and Governments; international and regional human rights procedures; training; the role of the media; sexual and reproductive health; political participation of women; education; changing male attitudes and behaviour; and the relationship of violence against women with general human rights conditions.

## V. Legal advocacy: process of establishing the International Criminal Court

17. Support for international, regional and national actions to increase legal literacy for the general public and to promote legal advocacy for specific purposes is another area that UNIFEM has emphasized in the past year. Of particular relevance was the support for non-governmental organizations that intervened in the drafting process for the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The Women's Caucus for Gender Justice in the International Criminal Court, with the support of UNIFEM, played a crucial role in advocating the need to incorporate a gender perspective in the Statute and provided the legal and technical expertise to the participating delegations. The action contributed to achieving the explicit recognition that acts of violence against women in war situations — that is, rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization and other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity — constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, which will be subject to the jurisdiction of the Court. UNIFEM is further committed to continuing to support organizations monitoring the process towards the establishment of the Court in order to ensure that women's interests and concerns are fully integrated into the basic documents that will guide the functioning of the Court.

## VI. Conclusions

18. The activities described above reflect some of the highlights regarding the role of UNIFEM in the elimination of violence against women. The Trust Fund will continue to support innovative initiatives aimed at implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, so that UNIFEM can play a catalytic role in sharing the strategies derived from its operational experience with all relevant actors. In this context, UNIFEM is currently reviewing the operation of the Trust Fund in order to further clarify its role and sharpen its future strategies. In this way UNIFEM hopes to contribute to meeting the needs of the international community with

respect to obtaining concrete and practical information on best practices for application everywhere and to develop a more concerted, holistic and comprehensive approach to ending violence against women.

*Notes*

[1] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

[2] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 7* (E/1998/27), chap. I, sect. B, draft resolution IV, sect. I.

[3] The six targeted areas of action are: an integrated, holistic approach; provision of resources to combat violence against all women; creation of linkages and cooperation with regard to particular forms of violence against women; legal measures; research and gender-disaggregated data collection; and change attitudes. See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 7* (E/1998/27), chap. I, sect. B, draft resolution IV, sects. I.A–I.F.

[4] In addition, a donor pledged approximately US$ 400,000 to the Trust Fund on 17 December 1998.

[5] The Project Approval Committee meeting was attended by participants representing the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Health Organization and the Joint United Nations Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome. Invitations were also extended to two members of the non-governmental organization community working in the area of violence against women.

[6] Six projects in Africa, 7 projects in Asia and the Pacific, 4 projects in Central and Eastern Europe and CIS, 10 projects in Latin America and the Caribbean and 2 global projects.

[7] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 7* (E/1998/27), chap. I, sect. B, draft resolution IV, sect. E.

[8] For information about the videoconference, see the UNIFEM Web site: http://www.unifem.undp.org.

[9] Detailed information about the Working Group online discussion, including membership, is available at the UNIFEM Web site (see note 8).